

Item 9

**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action
Statement by Finland**

Mr. President,

Finland fully associates itself to the statement made by Slovenia, on behalf of the European Union.

The Human Rights Council is offering us a good forum to discuss racial discrimination and other issues related to racism at international level and to find common understanding on how to end racism - a goal that is universally shared.

Discrimination based on ethnicity is something we all need to fight against. It is important to develop national practices in such way that different authorities, including police, can exercise a positive role while combating racism and promoting human rights. This is something Finland is strongly committed to, following for example the recommendations of, inter alia, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance.

We would like to use this opportunity to share with you a debate that has recently taken place in the Finnish media concerning the practices of law enforcement officers. The national Ombudsman for Minorities expressed her concerns that checking people's visa or residence permit merely based on their appearance might be discriminatory and stigmatize some minority groups.

This on-going debate in Finland has showed that all countries need functioning national mechanisms, like Ombudsmen. But even more importantly, the debate has shown that we can all play an important role in putting an end to racism and discrimination.

Thank you.